

I want to thank everyone for joining us today, but I especially want to express my appreciation to the Chamber of Commerce, including President Wes Jurey and Steve Zimmer, new chairman of the chamber board of directors.

This annual luncheon gives us an opportunity to focus on what we have accomplished as a community and offers a chance to look forward to our future together. We appreciate the chamber's work in organizing this event each year.

I also want to welcome members of the Arlington City Council and our City management team –who have provided strong leadership in these difficult times. Will you stand so that I can introduce you?

Mayor Pro Tem Kathryn Wilemon, district 4;

Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Mel LeBlanc, district 1;

Sheri Capehart, district 2;

Robert Rivera, district 3

Lana Wolff, district 5

Robert Shepard, at-large;

Jimmy Bennett, at-large;

and Gene Patrick, at-large, who could not be here today. Gene has been very ill, but is on the road to recovery.

(lead applause for Council)

Our Management Staff include Interim City Manager Bob Byrd; and Deputy City Managers Gilbert Perales and Trey Yelverton. We appreciate their work and the efforts of our nearly 2,500 City employees. *(lead applause)*

This year, as in 2010, our country continues to experience an uncertain economy – affecting both individuals and businesses. However, despite the challenge, we haven't put our heads in the sand. We continue to look for the right investments that provide results for our future ... laying a strong foundation for tomorrow.

I am proud of this City Council and the work they have done to manage in these difficult times. Although budget decisions have not been easy during the past two years, Arlington has fared much better than our peers in North Texas and across the nation. We ended the fiscal year with a \$3 million surplus. This is due to a lean operation, innovative

approaches to service delivery, and key investments which have shored up our revenue base. More than ever, we are poised for the future.

In Jim Collins' book, "Good to Great," he discusses the flywheel concept. "The Flywheel" refers to the idea of momentum – keep pushing that heavy wheel in one direction. Once the flywheel is in motion, all that stored energy tends to keep it moving in the right direction.

Momentum is built a little bit at a time – it's not a dramatic or revolutionary change, but constant, diligent work. I think that our work together – the work of all of us: the City, the Chamber, the County, the Convention and Visitors Bureau, our School Districts, UTA, TCC and many private sector businesses of all sizes – has shown us that when we push in the same direction, we can make that wheel move.

Now that it's moving, the momentum is carrying us forward of its own accord, bringing significant benefits today and, hopefully, for many years to come.

In the past five years, we and our private sector partners have invested more than \$2 billion in our economy. We are spending money where good investments can bring higher return to the community.

And we are doing it with partnerships.

In May, the City joined Huffines Communities in breaking ground on Viridian, a multi-phase, multi-year 2,300-acre project. This will provide the City with more than 5,000 additional residential units, 3.5 million square feet of unique mixed-use commercial development including retail and small office land uses.

The project is expected to include over \$2 billion in residential, retail and office development. We should see homes on the ground within the next year – and maybe much sooner. Once completed, we will welcome approximately 15,000 new residents to our city. They will get to enjoy an exciting, vibrant and unique place to live.

Another great partnership is General Motors – and thanks to Tom Vandergriff who brought them to our community.

Recently, city officials joined General Motors as they broke ground on a new 100,000 square foot expansion at the Arlington assembly plant. GM will add 110 jobs and invest \$331 million to purchase tooling and equipment and expand the Plant to make future Tahoes, Suburbans, Yukons, Cadillac Escalades and perhaps pickups.

This investment gets GM ready for new demands of the market and realities of new energy policies. It will also ensure that General Motors will be in our community for many, many years to come.

A third strategic partnership is the University of Texas at Arlington with its College Park District project that includes The Green at College Park and the Special Events Center located on Center Street. It will include student housing, retail shops and a parking garage. This project is important, not just to our downtown community ... but also to our student community! It's important to UTA and brings them closer to their goal of becoming a Tier 1 University with a college town environment.

UT-Arlington has seen record enrollment numbers. They have over 33,000 students and 7,000 faculty members on campus this fall. When I was first elected mayor in 2003, UTA had 15,000 students – so the student body has more than doubled in the past 8 years. One new student housing development has opened at Abram and Davis streets and a second one will open in the fall of 2012 at Abrams and Kerby streets – all to keep up with the increasing number of students in our community.

These projects are about connectivity and enhancing the development of the Downtown University District. It brings us another step closer toward fulfilling our master plan in creating a lively downtown ... where we see feet on the street at all times of the day and night. And if you have visited the area lately, then you know there are more patrons every day and every night – this is due to the opening of several new restaurants and a vibrant crowd who enjoy concerts at the Levitt Pavilion.

We have seen a return on our economic development investments combined with conservative fiscal practices. This has meant that fewer cuts have been required in our budget and services that affect citizens the most ... such as public safety, parks and recreation, libraries and neighborhood support.

Neighborhoods, which are the fabric of our community, continue to strengthen. We are developing strategic partnerships with our residents, helping them to plan for the future and finding leadership who will continue this work.

Our ‘Strong Neighborhoods Initiative’ now includes more than 100 associations. This is great, but we need more. We know government cannot and should not do everything. As citizens, we all have responsibilities to our neighbors. So I encourage you, if you have not recently been to a neighborhood association meeting where you live, find out when the next one is scheduled. If one isn’t scheduled, give us a call, and we will help you organize one. Working together with your fellow citizens, you can make your neighborhood and all of Arlington even better and safer.

Let me tell you about a neighborhood where citizens have made a huge difference. Five years ago, Lisa Wood went door-to-door, meeting people, collecting email addresses and enlisting residents to work together to improve the Lake Port Meadows neighborhood, located in the southeast corner of Arlington near Joe Pool Lake.

Because of her tenacity, neighbors and their children decided to come outside and meet each other. That led to neighborhood friendships and a powerful grassroots organization to strengthen a community where people feel safe anywhere, all the time. Today, Lake Port Meadows is a well-connected, youthful, family-oriented and culturally diverse neighborhood.

They have drafted a vision statement for the neighborhood, focusing on a safe and secure environment and an active neighborhood life.

The group has attained non-profit status and is currently working together on planning efforts to extend Eden Road, build school bus stops and two city parks with lighted walkways, benches and bike lanes. Imagine – all that started with one person saying hello to her neighbors.

Others have also been reaching out to partner in our community. One basic need in our society is the ability to read or the ability to read well. It can make a tremendous impact on a person’s life. Our library system has introduced library cards to every student in the school district. With programs such as the Library GoCard, we are supporting families and educators in their work to build a strong foundation in basic literacy skills for

children. But it is not only for the children. There are also too many adults who cannot read.

To stretch our resources, the library program “Arlington Reads” recently joined with First United Methodist Church and the Rotary Club of Arlington in a partnership that offers literacy classes for residents.

Many volunteers are helping improve the lives of adults who can strengthen their literacy skills and be more successful in our community. Does it make a difference? You bet. Participants are helping their children with homework, getting degrees and getting better paying jobs – all because of this program and its partners.

I want to talk about another huge partnership in our community.

Arlington school superintendent Jerry McCullough has done a great job of working to push that flywheel we discussed and to continually improve the performance of our school district. His goal is a bold one – to have both the district and its schools ranked as either recognized or exemplary. And I don’t think I have to tell you that his flywheel is probably the heaviest around. Getting that momentum moving towards improved school performance is and has always been a challenge. Jerry needs more shoulders at the wheel to move things along, and I believe I speak for everyone here when I say that we are prepared to be those shoulders.

A good start toward that goal happened at the beginning of the school year when nearly 350 volunteers – and our City Council – joined Jerry, administrators, teachers and staff last month to visit students who were enrolled in school last spring, but not this fall. Because of this effort, 75 students committed to return to school. We are all working to keep kids in school and help them build a better future.

We also partnered with the school district for the ‘Move with the Mayor’ program which is in its second year. We want kids to develop good eating and exercise habits, and we started our fight against childhood obesity with getting kids to move more.

At the end of each school year, pedometers are distributed to each fifth-grade student to keep count of their steps over the summer months. At the beginning of the next school year, we honor the top three walkers. This year, winner Katie Clark walked just over 5

million steps. She, along with 2 other top winners, won tickets from Six Flags. These are small steps, but we want to involve everyone – students and residents – in moving more.

Another group of AISD students joined a unique new program in August that allows them to train for the fire service while still in high school.

The AISD High School Fire Academy is a two-year course created by the Fire department, school district and Tarrant County College – another partnership - to prepare students who want to pursue a career in fire service.

This is just one of the ways the Arlington Fire Department, headed by Chief Don Crowson, has developed new recruiting strategies to seek top quality candidates, which reflect diversity and talent for its workforce.

The department also opened a new Fire Station this year. Well, it's the same Fire Station No. 9 –just in a different location. The old building was located on Cooper Street, but a new station was rebuilt on Wimbledon Drive. The \$3.4 million fire station was approved by voters in 2008 and became the first public safety building in Arlington to receive LEEDS certification – Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design.

The Arlington Police Department, headed by Chief Theron Bowman, also joined with the school district this year for a new truancy reduction program. Its primary goal is keeping every child in every class every school day. They work with AISD personnel to make joint home visits to consistently absent students and help with on-site mediation services to five elementary schools which have significant truancy problems.

Community involvement is critical for the police department to help with reducing crime in our City and reflects the Council's priority that residents and visitors feel safe anywhere, anytime. Efforts which may seem small, such as participating in the Citizens on Patrol program, or reporting suspicious behavior, all contribute towards the momentum to fight crime.

It seems to be working. Overall crime is down – and it has been a steady decline over the past four years. This slide shows crimes per 100,000 residents, and how the crime rate has decreased. It is a great example of the power of the combined efforts of many

contributing to the momentum which move us in a positive direction. Thank you for all of you who contributed to this change and helped our police drive crime out of our city.

I'm sure all of you have noticed – our entertainment district has truly turned into a year-round attraction.

And, this year we were able to celebrate a milestone connected to the origins of our Entertainment District – the one that helped Arlington become the Family Entertainment Capital of Texas – that is Six Flags Over Texas.

The theme park celebrated its 50th anniversary this year. It has come a long way since Day 1. It is now part of a billion dollar corporation with 19 locations across North America. Fifty years ago it took \$10 million dollars to build Six Flags and that \$10 million is what it cost this year for them to renovate the famous Texas Giant roller coaster last year.

Our Entertainment District is one of the most important economic drivers in our city. In 2010, visitor spending in Arlington totaled \$593 million – that's up 8.4 percent over 2008. For comparison, the total direct tourism output for all of the United States declined by 6.4 percent during the same period.

If tourism spending within Arlington had followed the national trend, this would have resulted in \$81 million being taken out of our local economy.

Tourism spending creates 10,500 jobs in our community, representing 8.8 percent of all private employment. Tourism-supported employment has grown by 9.5 percent since 2008.

Direct tourism employment in the US declined by 9.4 percent in same period of time. If Arlington had followed the national trend, it would have resulted in 1,800 jobs being lost in our community.

This weekend, we have another opportunity to welcome visitors to our city for two big events. The Cowboys play the St. Louis Rams on Sunday, and we find ourselves on the eve of hosting our second consecutive World Series. And with this series, Arlington

becomes the first city to host a Super Bowl and two World Series within a 12-month period.

As in so many parts of our city, their success leads to our success. All of us working together to make Arlington a thriving place to live and work. We will continue to invest our resources in places and people where the return will be clear – creating more opportunities and creating more jobs – for us all. The flywheel’s momentum has sparked a new excitement in our community. We are poised for the future – and we thank you for being part of it.

Thank you.